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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 1112  
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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: MEDIA REACTION, MAY 22 - 29

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1. SUMMARY: Mukhtar Dzhakishev, the head of the state nuclear company, Kazatomprom, was arrested this week as a part of a continuing government anti-corruption campaign. The other major story was the publication and banning of "Godfather-in-Law," a book written by the former son-in-law of President Nazarbayev, Rakhat Aliyev. Also, the popular daily "Liter" commented on the recent North Korean missile tests and the world's reaction to them, and the analytical weekly "Delovaya Nedelya" focused on whether Kazakhstan should join the anti-terrorist coalition in Afghanistan. And finally, pro-government "Megapolis" published a vitriolic, anti-American article about a series of civil society-building seminars funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI). END SUMMARY.

THE ARRESTS CONTINUE

2. The arrest of Mukhtar Dzhakishev caused many independent and opposition figures to speculate that his arrest had more to do with politics than with corruption. Independent, Russian-language "Biznes i Vlast (Business and Politics)" quoted Vladimir Kozlov, head of the unregistered Alga opposition party, as saying, "these arrests are turning into an epidemic that is mowing down the best. It was under Dzhakishev that Kazatomprom became an international uranium leader. Suddenly, he has turned into a thief and a criminal." (COMMENT: Dzhakishev has close ties to ousted BTA Bank head Mukhtar Ablyazov, who finances Alga. END COMMENT.) Human rights activist Yevgeniy Zhovtis said the arrest was not "a consequence of a systematic anti-corruption campaign, but rather of political infighting." Independent, Russian-language "Vremya" reports on a letter from a group of businessmen to President Nazarbayev protesting that "law enforcement agencies have launched a full--scale attack on business, killing the entrepreneurial spirit and persecuting the best business people. Mukhtar Dzhakishev is one of them."

"GODFATHER-IN-LAW"

13. Pro-government, Russian-language "Delovaya Nedelya," commenting on Rakhat Aliyev's book "Godfather-in-Law" just after its publication, said, "It is obvious that the author's goal was not to understand why Kazakhstan is still a poorly-developed country, but to seek revenge on Nazarbayev for his downfall." The author conceded, "It is hard to judge the book without reading it, but it is even harder to write about Ak Orda's (i.e., the Presidential Administration's) crimes without mentioning Rakhat Aliyev's role in them." The author speculated about how Kazakhstani officials will react to the book by saying, "The authorities can choose to demonstrate their adequacy, the maturity of the society, and the scrupulousness of law enforcement when choosing how to react to the book. However, the authorities can also do just the opposite: they can start a new court case, look for the book in the luggage of passengers coming from Europe, or block the Internet. But such measures will only become a silent acknowledgement of guilt."

14. Soon after the "Delovaya Nedelya" story, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) "Radio Azzatyq" reported that Kazakhstan's Procurator General's Office had filed a lawsuit against "Godfather-In-Law" for "breaking the law on the privacy of correspondence and telephone conversations." In a separate "Radio Azzatyq" interview, Rakhat Aliyev said that these actions by the procurator's office are an acknowledgement that the book is true. "Who gave the order to start the case?" asked Aliyev, "probably the main character of the book." Pro-government, Russian-language "Express K" quoted the executive secretary of the Agency of Information and Communication, Batyr Makhanbetazhiev, who said that Kazakhtelekom has blocked access to the websites Geo.kz and Live Journal (where Rakhat Aliyev frequently posts) due to "a court decision to stop the dissemination of illegal information."

"CAPRICIOUS CHILD"

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15. Pro-government, Russian-language "Liter" commented on North Korea's missile tests, noting that "Pyongyang received no benefits from the tests and faced harsh criticism from many countries," including Kazakhstan. The author blamed the Obama administration, because "while trying to normalize relations with Iran, Cuba, and even Syria, the White House and State Department neglected North Korea. This demonstrates the absence of an American strategy towards the Korean peninsula." While "Pyongyang behaves like a capricious child who screams and cries," its "old plan" is not working this time because "for the first time since the end of the Cold War, the world has taken a unified position on this issue." The author concluded that since "Kazakhstan was the first country to abandon its Soviet-era nuclear arsenal, the camp of Kazakhstan's potential allies is growing."

AFGHANISTAN CALLING?

16. "Delovaya Nedelya" published two articles on how Kazakhstan should approach the situation in Afghanistan. In the first, the author stated that NATO is trying to "internationalize" the conflict without having "a clear action plan." He noted, "American diplomats regularly probe Kazakhstan's willingness to participate in operations in Afghanistan and praise the role of Kazakhstan's soldiers in Iraq. From its side, Kazakhstan has unequivocally made it clear that cooperation with NATO will be beneficial for them." The author believes that Kazakhstan's involvement in Afghanistan will cause "understandable irritation" for Russia, but thinks that Kazakhstan will participate regardless because this will strengthen the "western factor" in Kazakhstan's foreign policy. However, he warned that the current strategy in Afghanistan "is not bringing the desired results" and NATO is "only making the situation worse." Also, "starting from 2001, drug trafficking has increased 40 percent." The author acknowledged that the proximity of Afghanistan to Kazakhstan, as well as Astana's interest in Afghanistan's stability, constitute a good argument for getting involved, but concluded that "the consequences of involvement are very hard to predict."

17. The second Afghanistan article was an interview with Sergey Pashevich, president of the Union of Combat Brotherhood and a

veteran of the Soviet-Afghan War. Pashevich said that Kazakhstan should not get involved in the anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan. In his view, the Afghan people have become hostages to the politics of both America and its own neighbors. "When the Americans start brewing trouble, they try to pull everyone in" so that participating nations are unable to criticize American actions.

Pashevich argued that Kazakhstan's weak social safety net for veterans is another reason for it to avoid the casualties it could take in Afghanistan.

#### SINISTER SEMINARS

18. Pro-government, Russian-language "Megapolis" published an attack on USAID and IRI for a series of 12 civil society seminars that focused on political party development. Claiming that "only opposition party members and youth organizations took part in the seminars," the author said, "It is curious that the main topic of the seminar was increasing youth political activity through organizing flash mobs." (COMMENT: USAID and IRI invited Kazakhstan's ruling party, Nur Otan, to participate in all of the seminars, and Nur Otan chose to participate in half of them. END COMMENT) He characterized the seminars as presenting methods of manipulating young people to work against the government, saying that seminar leaders stated that "unemployed young people are ideal for organizing disturbances and overthrowing the authorities." The author concludes, "Due to the absence of state ideological programs for young people, ideologists from Western countries are trying to take control over the minds and hearts of Kazakhstani youth."

HOAGLAND